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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002905

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SUBJECT: DPJ DIET AFFAIRS CHIEF'S VIEW ON US-JAPAN RELATIONS

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James P. Zumwalt for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The DCM's December 17 meeting with Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chair Kenji Yamaoka centered primarily on U.S.-Japan relations and, more specifically, on issues related to the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Yamaoka expounded on PM Hatoyama's decision earlier this week to delay putting forth a concrete proposal and said that the PM wants to wait until May 2010, when the budget has passed the Diet and support from junior coalition partners Social Democratic Party (SDP) and People's New Party (PNP) will no longer be necessary. In contrast to previous meetings with Embassy Tokyo, Yamaoka expressed pessimism about prospects for the current Futenma relocation plan. He conveyed particular concern about the local Okinawan political environment and the efficacy of the relocation opposition movement. Yamaoka characterized Osaka Governor Hashimoto's proposal to shift some of Futenma functions to Kansai International Airport and Osaka International Airport as "interesting." Yamaoka also mentioned the strong possibility of DPJ Secretary General Ozawa becoming Prime Minister and advised the United States to start having unofficial dialogue with Ozawa and to host a visit some time in early January. Finally, Yamaoka sharply criticized Foreign Ministry diplomacy under the previous Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led government and also under current Foreign Minister and fellow party member Katsuya Okada. END SUMMARY

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Futenma Relocation Dominates Discussion  
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¶2. (C) DPJ Diet Affairs Committee Chair Kenji Yamaoka invited the DCM to his office on December 17 to discuss his December 10-13 trip to China with party Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa (septel), but the conversation centered primarily on U.S.-Japan relations and, more specifically, on issues related to the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Yamaoka and the DCM agreed on the importance of focusing on broader alliance goals and on areas of cooperation, such as missile defense and information sharing.

13. (C) Yamaoka explained PM Hatoyama's decision earlier this week to delay putting forth a concrete proposal on Futenma relocation. The Prime Minister, he said, wants to wait until May 2010, when the budget has long passed the Diet and support from junior coalition partners Social Democratic Party and People's New Party is no longer necessary.

14. (C) In contrast to previous meetings with Embassy Tokyo, however, Yamaoka expressed clear pessimism about implementing the current Futenma Replacement Facility plan. He conveyed concern about the local Okinawan political environment and the relocation opposition movement, in particular. He speculated that local sentiment will complicate any DPJ efforts to conclude a relocation agreement by May. Landfill procedures and other implementation details will also take longer than expected. In the end, the "negatives" outweighed the "positives," Yamaoka concluded.

15. (C) Yamaoka admitted that he was not an expert on alliance management issues, but he offered his own suggestions on the way forward. He asked about the extent to which other sites could assume some of Futenma's current functions. Yamaoka characterized as "interesting" Osaka Governor Hashimoto's proposal to shift some of Futenma's roles to Kansai International Airport and Osaka International Airport. Training could take place at the airports and housing could be located in the urban parts of the Kansai region, Yamaoka theorized. The Governor probably sees such a plan as a debt relief measure for his prefecture, Yamaoka added.

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Pushing For Ozawa Visit  
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16. (C) Yamaoka mentioned the strong possibility of Ozawa

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becoming Prime Minister after Hatoyama. These days, Ozawa is focused on party management and avoids inserting himself in policy-related affairs. For example, Ozawa meets ambassadors only for courtesy calls, not for substantive discussions. Yamaoka advised the United States to start unofficial dialogue with the party Secretary General. Such course would help turn bilateral relations around, Yamaoka insisted. Yamaoka also proposed that Ozawa make an "informal" and "personal visit" to the United States. "He can fish and sightsee for three or more days" while holding official meetings. Yamaoka stressed the importance of Ozawa meeting counterparts who have access to the U.S. President. Such a trip would set the stage for "informal consensus building" between the United States and Japan before Ozawa actually becomes Prime Minister, Yamaoka said.

17. (C) Regarding timing, Yamaoka pointed to early January 2010, before the regular Diet session, which he guessed might convene January 22. Post-Upper House election in July could be an alternative but Ozawa could well be the Prime Minister by that time. Yamaoka said that he would convince Ozawa to make the visit, once Washington agreed. He encouraged the USG to move quickly on the matter.

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Critical of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)  
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18. (C) Yamaoka sharply criticized MOFA diplomacy under the previous LDP-led government and also under current Foreign Minister and fellow party member Katsuya Okada. Believing that tensions would continue in U.S.-Japan relations, Yamaoka underscored the need to review Japan's diplomacy and foreign policy decisionmaking structures.

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Comment  
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19. (C) The Mainichi and Yomiuri newspapers gave inside-page

coverage to the meeting between Yamaoka and the DCM. The papers quoted the DCM as saying that the "Futenma issue is not the only issue in U.S.-Japan relations and that the U.S would like to build positive relations in other areas." In fact, Yamaoka attributed these comments to the DCM. We have seen this trend recently whereby our Japanese interlocutors characterize our views to the press, usually to the effect that the USG has been amenable to the GOJ's indecision on Futenma, in deference to the overall relationship.

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